

Introduction

Ronald Regan's Trickle-Down Economics

1. Today we're going to talk about something similar, but from a spiritual perspective
2. I'm going to call it Trickle-Down Discipleship
3. Our focus is going to be primarily on four individuals:
  - a. We're going to see how Paul's commitment to discipleship impacted a husband and wife named Priscilla and Aquila
  - b. We'll then see how their commitment to discipleship impacted another individual named Apollos
  - c. Finally, we'll see how Apollo's commitment to discipleship then impacted believers at Corinth
  - d. In other words, we're going to see how Trickle-Down Discipleship works

A. Paul's commitment to discipleship impacted Priscilla and Aquila (READ 18:18-23)

1. When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, he not only took Silas and Timothy with him, but a married couple named Priscilla and Aquila
2. We were introduced to them last week:
  - a. They were the first people Paul met at Corinth (18:2)
  - b. They were Jews who came to Corinth after having been kicked out of Rome by Claudius
  - c. They opened up their home to Paul, and because they were tent-makers like he was, they allowed him to work along side them (likely in their shop in the marketplace)
  - d. It's not clear if they were Christians or not when Paul met them, but it's clear from the rest of the Scriptures that if they weren't, it wasn't long before they not only became believers but leaders in the early church
3. Paul must have been impressed with these two because he not only took them along with him to Ephesus, but left them there when he departed for Caesarea and Antioch (likely to continue serving the new believers there in Ephesus in his absence):
  - a. Look again at v. 18: "**And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to see for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila**"
  - b. Now, jump down to v. 19: "**And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there...**"
4. So, how did these two go from being simple Jewish tent-makers to people Paul could trust to care for the new believers at Ephesus?
  - a. Remember Paul spent a year and a half "**teaching the Word of God**" to the believers in Corinth and this would have included Priscilla and Aquila (18:11)
  - b. During this time, he stayed at the home of Priscilla and Aquila which would have provided opportunity to get to know Paul and even engage in significant Biblical and spiritual discussions (18:3)
  - c. As we'll see in a moment, Priscilla and Aquila later hosted churches in their homes in two other cities—Ephesus and Rome—so it's possible that they may have done that here in Corinth, especially with Paul living there

5. As I've mentioned before, Paul wasn't simply interested in evangelism; he didn't just want people to get saved, but to mature into Christ-loving, Christ-honoring, Christ-serving disciples:
  - a. We have evidence of this in the letters he wrote—almost half of our New Testament was written by him and provides instructions, encouragement, and even some chastisement for the purpose of helping those he led to Christ grow and mature in the Faith
  - b. But, we also have evidence of Paul's commitment to discipleship in how he recruited others and then modeled for them what it meant to serve Jesus:
    - 1) If I did my math right, there are at least 24 people mentioned in the NT that Paul recruited and mentored, and who then served alongside him:
      - a) You know most of the well-known names like Silas, Timothy, Titus, and Luke
      - b) But there are a host of others: Archippus, Aristarchus, Artemas, Crescens, Demas, Epaphras, Erastus, Eubulus, Eunice, Euodia, Syntyche, Gaius, Jason, Philemon, Phoebe, Secundus, Sopater, Tertius, Trophimus, Onesiphorus, and Tychicus
    - 2) We get a picture of how important it was for Paul to be an example—a model—for others by looking at his final words to Timothy in 2 Timothy:
      - a) “5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. 6 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” (1:5-6)
      - b) “8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,” (1:7-8)
      - c) “13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” (1:13)
      - d) “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (2:1-3)
      - e) “10 Now you followed my teaching, [my] conduct, [my] purpose, [my] faith, [my] patience, [my] love, [my] perseverance, 11 [my] persecutions, and [my] sufferings,” (3:10-11)

6. So, let's bring this back to Priscilla and Aquilla:
  - a. Paul's ministry obviously had a tremendous effect on them because they become invaluable leaders in the early church
  - b. Turn to Romans 16:3; I want us to see how Paul refers to them just over a year later (READ):
    - 1) First, notice that Paul refers to them as "**my fellow workers in Christ Jesus**" this is a phrase Paul used to refer to those who not only served alongside him, but those who served on his behalf in his absence (much like Timothy and Silas did):
      - a) For instance, remember that Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half; the fact that Paul took Priscilla and Aquila along with him when he left suggests they were already working alongside him in Corinth
      - b) Also, as we'll see in a moment, after they traveled with Paul to Ephesus, he left them there, likely to continue teaching the churches there in his absence
    - 2) Second, notice that Paul says they "**risked their necks for him**"—this likely happened during the riot that happened in Ephesus (Acts 19)

- 3) Third, notice that Paul said he wasn't the only one who was thankful for their ministry, but "**also all the churches of the Gentiles**"; this tells us that Priscilla and Aquila were well known and loved by the Gentile churches, and these churches were grateful for their ministry
  - 4) Finally, notice that Paul refers to them hosting a church in their house:
    - a) Paul actually refers to them hosting two different churches in their homes in two different cities
    - b) This reference refers to their home in Rome which means that they must have returned home to Rome for a short period of time and hosted a church there
    - c) The other reference is from 1 Corinthians 16:19 (READ) and this one refers to their home in Ephesus (Paul wrote this letter from there)
  - c. Paul refers to them one last time in 2 Timothy 4:19 when he asks Timothy to pass along his greeting to them: Timothy was in Ephesus so this means that Priscilla and Aquila had returned to Ephesus at some point and were apparently ministering alongside him
7. Paul's commitment to discipleship led to developing great leaders like Silas and Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila, and dozens of others, but it led to something even more significant—servants who did the same thing for others that Paul did for them

#### B. Priscilla's and Aquilla's commitment to discipleship impacted Apollos (18:24-26)

- 1. While Priscilla and Aquila were serving the church at Ephesus, a Jew named Apollos shows up and begins to teach in the synagogues (READ 18:24-26a):
  - a. He was from Alexandria which was a large Roman city in Egypt
  - b. The NASB says that he was an "**eloquent man**"—this term can mean either eloquent (referring to eloquence of speech) or educated/learned (as the NIV)
  - c. The latter is more likely because the next thing we learn about him is that "**he was mighty in the Scriptures**" and had been "**instructed in the way of the Lord**"—which means that he was well versed in the Old Testament
  - d. We are also told that he was an enthusiastic ("**fervent in spirit**") speaker and teacher and began to "**speak out boldly in the synagogue.**"
- 2. There was only one problem; Apollos' understanding of salvation wasn't complete (READ 26b):
  - a. There is a lot of debate and little consensus on whether or not Apollos is saved at this point:
    - 1) In v. 25 it says that he was "**teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus**"—which suggests he might have been saved
    - 2) But it also says he was "**acquainted only with the baptism of John**" and that Priscilla and Aquilla had to "**explain to him the way of God more accurately**"—which suggests he might not have been saved (26b)
    - 3) So, which is it?
  - b. A quick look at another passage--Acts 19:1-7—may help (READ):
    - 1) We'll be studying this next week, so I'll just summarize it here
    - 2) Luke refers to this group of 12 men as "**disciples**" but like Apollos their understanding of salvation seems incomplete
    - 3) They never received the Holy Spirit, and either weren't even aware of the Holy Spirit or weren't aware that He had been poured out on believers (depending on the translation)

- 4) Also, like Apollos, they weren't aware of Christian baptism, having only been familiar with and associated with the baptism of John the Baptist
  - 5) The one main difference between these men and Apollos, is that while he appears to have been familiar with Jesus, it appears these men were not until Paul explained that Jesus was the Christ and the one to whom John the Baptist was pointing to
- c. I believe the most reasonable answer is that Apollos was a disciple of John the Baptist who had accepted his message of repentance, and John's claim that Jesus was the Messiah, but his knowledge of the Gospel was somewhat incomplete because he was unaware of the events that occurred after Jesus' death, burial and resurrection:
- 1) I think the most natural way to interpret Luke's comments about Apollos accurately teaching the things concerning Jesus is that he was teaching that Jesus was the Messiah
  - 2) However, since he was only acquainted with the baptism of John, his knowledge about Jesus and the Gospel would have been limited to only what John preached, and would not have included what Jesus revealed to His Apostles in the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension
  - 3) It wasn't until Priscilla and Aquilla spent time teaching him and "**explain[ing] to him the way of God more accurately**" that he came to fully comprehend the Gospel in its fullness
3. I'm going to propose here that it was Priscilla's and Aquilla's ministry at Ephesus and their commitment to discipleship that ultimately led to Apollos becoming what we see next

#### C. Apollos' commitment to discipleship impacted the believers in Corinth (READ 18:27-28)

1. The believers at Ephesus must have been impressed with Apollos because when he expressed a desire to go to Achaia (refers to the region of Southern Greece), they "**encouraged him and wrote to the disciples [there] to welcome him**" (27a)
2. He ultimately ended up at Corinth, and when he arrived Luke wrote that he immediately began to do for the believers there what Paul had done for Priscilla and Aquilla, and what they had done for him (27): "**he helped greatly those who had believed through grace**"
  - a. In other words, the one who had been discipled was not discipling others
  - b. Pastor Krenz discipled me, I've discipled others, and some of them are now discipling others themselves
3. Luke also wrote that he became a skilled evangelist as well (28): "**for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ**"
4. Earlier we learned how important Priscilla and Aquilla became to the early Church, and the same can be said of Apollos:
  - a. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he referred to Apollos as someone who "**watered**" what he had planted, referring to Apollos' role teaching and discipling believers there (1 Corinthians 3:6)
  - b. He was apparently well liked and respected because Paul had to chastise the Corinthians for placing Apollos on a pedestal (1 Corinthians 1:12-13)
  - c. Outside of his ministry at Corinth we don't know much more, accept that at one point he was with Paul at Ephesus (when he wrote 1 Corinthians; 16:12), and was with Titus later on Crete (Titus 3:13)

## Conclusion

1. You've heard us say before that Jesus didn't command evangelism, but discipleship
2. He isn't merely interested in converts; He wants followers who honor Him by obeying what He taught
3. He even told us how to do this (Matthew 28:19-20): "**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**"
4. We've seen three excellent examples of this today: Paul taught Priscilla and Aquilla, who in turn taught Apollos, who in turn taught believers at Corinth
5. By its very nature, genuine discipleship should work this way; it should trickle down